

WHO'LL GROW THE VEGETABLES WHEN THE JAPANESE BARRED OUT?

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THERE is a great deal of publicity lately concerning the Japanese question, the last phase of which is designed to prohibit the orientales from leasing land. But in no such article have I seen a practical suggestion as to who, or what class of people is to take the place of the Japanese farmers.

Evidently the great majority of persons are grossly misinformed on the subject and though perfectly honest in their belief that the Japanese are a detriment to California, do not know the relative value of the Japanese farmer to our vegetable industry. I refer especially to those writers and committees of various clubs who have been spreading anti-Japanese propaganda through the newspapers and public meetings and circulating petitions for signers.

Should the people of California inform themselves at first hand as to the real conditions, and what is required to raise a crop of vegetables or berries, their censure would turn to praise for these most industrious, peaceful and hard-working people.

But whatever the sentiment may be, the question remains: Who is to take the place of the Japanese truck farmer? How is the country to be supplied with the small fruits and vegetables that require close down-to-the-ground cultivation, constant back bending and endless labor?

Will the American farmer grow vegetables in quantities sufficient for local consumption and for eastern shipment?

No.

Why?

Because the American farmer will not subject himself to the conditions and laborious efforts that are necessary to produce truck garden crops. He is not fitted by nature, nor by generations of ancestors engaged in the same occupation for such work.

AN INHERITED ART.

The Japanese are very skillful in raising vegetables and have a thorough knowledge of truck or market gardening. This knowledge has not been obtained in America, however, as the Japanese are raised from childhood on exceedingly small farms, many of the Japanese farms being simply tiny plots of ground, nothing more than terraces on hillsides, which are farmed to secure the greatest production in the smallest space. Thus it is that the Japanese early learns the methods by which to secure the largest market garden crops on the least ground. Our low prices now, on vegetables, can be held only by this present system of Japanese intensive farming.

Truck gardening requires a great deal of small, painstaking handwork, which must be given incessantly and rapidly, with every day a long day and often going far into the night. Then the bunching of vegetables for market is by no means an easy task. The Japanese can succeed on account of whole families working in the field. But if labor were to be hired at harvest time for this class of crop, the price of our vegetables would be exorbitant.

Also it is necessary to transplant many of the vegetable crops, such as celery, cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, peppers and egg plants; and there are a great many that need thinning, as lettuce, turnips, beets, onions, etc. The operation of caring for, growing and harvesting all these crops is very tedious, hard and requires an endless amount of patience. Even then it is more or less of a gamble, as the price to be obtained for the crop is constantly changing and usually low. Often the crop will not pay for its care and harvesting.

This makes the business very difficult for our American people, not only from the very nature of the labor it necessitates, but because, after a crop has been grown, it is most discouraging to find that it will not pay for harvesting and that the only thing to be done is to disc it under for fertilizer with nothing left but hard work for one's pains. Yet this hardship is born stoically by the Japanese, because from childhood they are taught not to show their disappointment. And their greatest honor is to die for a worthy cause—in war with an opposing enemy, or in battle with the soil.

AMERICANS CAN'T BEND.

As regards the growing of strawberries in California. It is conceded that this commodity is grown exclusively by the Japanese farmers. The reason for this lies in the fact that the production of a strawberry crop requires the closet application of hand work. To the ordinary consumer of berries, strawberries are strawberries, nothing more. Comparatively few are familiar with the different varieties and practically even a larger percentage are totally ignorant of the fact that it requires three years to produce two crops of strawberries and that but two years' crops are grown on the same plants. At the end of the third year the vines stop producing and must be plowed up.

Although land rental, water for irrigating and the expense in harvesting are the main items to be considered, the difficult part of raising strawberries lies in the fact that the fruit grows so close to the ground that it is necessary in putting in the plants, caring for them and harvesting the crop for the farmer to assume the position of kneeling or a "squat" and this is a position difficult for an American to negotiate for any length of time, for his legs are too long and his back is too stiff.

Should our American farmer attempt to undergo the ordeals of the Japanese farmer he would find the proposition exceedingly arduous and our vegetables and small fruits would be at prohibitive prices, due to their scarcity, since the American farmer, unused to intensive methods, will grow but one crop in a year. The Japanese, on the other hand, grow a succession of crops.

DO JAPS RUIN LAND?

Both in vegetables and berries the Japanese produce large crops of their perfect system of planting, fertilizing and caring for the plants with copious irrigation and painstaking cultivation and by this method are also able to farm poorer land than the American farmer.

And this leads me to the statement which is so often made that the Japanese impoverish the land upon which they farm. This statement is erroneous inasmuch as the Japanese farmers use immense quantities of fertilizer. They will in many cases use as high as a ton of fertilizer to the acre for the ordinary crop. The minimum amount for vegetable crops runs from 400 to 600 pounds per acre; for potatoes, from 500 to 1000 pounds per acre and for berries, 500 to 1000 pounds per acre. One farmer whom I know used 2,000 pounds per acre for strawberries. At the present prices of fertilizer this

means an enormous expenditure outside the regular expenses that are required to produce a crop.

If I have seemed to draw a line between the American farmer and the Japanese farmer, it is because I have desired to show the great difference between the American farmer and the market gardener. There is no better class of farmers in the world than our California farmers, but it must be understood that our American farmers are not truck gardeners. The American farmer will grow and produce to perfection large field crops on a large scale, such as alfalfa, wheat, oats, barely, rye, beans, grasses, corn and fodder crops; also citrus and deciduous fruits, in fact everything that can be handled by our improved methods and machinery, but even as expert and willing as we all know them to be, neither the farmer nor their sons, their daughters nor their wives, care to, or are equal to undergoing the ordeal of market gardening, neither by inclination, duty or choice. And I have yet to hear the first American farmer say he will undertake to operate a market garden of sufficient size to even approximately supply vegetables for local consumption or for Eastern shipment.

Therefore, should the Japanese be excluded from the market garden industry, from where, and when, and from whom are we to receive our supply?

The salaries for American labor for American young men in every line of business and industry in our country are so alluring that there are not only few, but there are none who are willing to operate a market garden. And notwithstanding, all the modern improvements and machinery they will not in most cases, so much as work on the farm, even where they are free from responsibility, investment, etc.

Should the Japanese be forced from the farms which they now occupy, the same condition would prevail here as in the East, where the young men have given up the farms and gone to the city because there the salaries are large with but eight hours work per day. On consequence nothing is grown for market, the older people remaining on the farms raising only sufficient for themselves. And with a steadily decreasing supply and increasing demand the price of food will continue to advance.

The Japanese are here, they are ready and willing to do the work; all they ask is the chance. We need the vegetables and small fruits they know how to raise, and there is absolutely no one else to supply it. We can not afford to do without them.